

U-2 Spy Planes Spot Missiles Israelis Say Broke Cease-Fire

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WASHINGTON — High altitude American reconnaissance planes are flying over the Suez Canal to monitor the cease-fire agreement under an understanding with the Egyptians and Israelis, it was learned Friday.

The U.S. aircraft, said to be U-2 spy planes, have taken photographs of the area into which Egypt allegedly moved SAM missiles within hours after the "standstill cease-fire" went into effect. These show the missiles cited in Israeli charges.

But the United States has no photographs of the region immediately before the armistice that would prove unequivocally when the missiles were emplaced. The United States does have photos, apparently from satellites, taken two or more days prior to the cease-fire, but the day and even more, the last hours, before the cease-fire deadline is crucial to proving or disproving the Israeli allegation, informed sources said.

Some American experts said they believed the United States would never know for certain whether a violation did occur. But others held out hope that electronic intelligence will provide the answer. This intelligence presumably consists of intercepted radio signals between vehicles that emplaced the missiles and check-out signals from the missiles and their command center.

Informed sources said there was a de facto understanding between the Arabs and Israeli disputants and the United States that permits the American overflights. It is not a specific part of the cease-fire package deal.

Where the long-range U-2 planes are based was not revealed except that the aircraft—which came to public attention when Francis Gary Powers was shot down in one over the Soviet Union 10 years ago—do not land in Egypt or Israel.

Several more days are expected to pass before the U.S. government finally makes a judgment on whether in fact the Egyptians and Russians broke their word immediately after signing it.

The United States would prefer to confront the Russians with its own rather than someone else's evidence, sources said.

The Russian response would be uncertain even to unchallengeable American evidence, however. There is little likelihood, for example, that the United States would even ask the Russians to pull back the missiles, as in the Cuban missile crisis.

The Israelis, on the other hand, have made rectification of the alleged violation a first order of business for the broader American peace plan.

This does not mean Israel would boycott the embryonic peace talks with U. N. mediator Gunnar V. Jarring if the missiles stay in place, nor even try to wipe out the offending weapons in an air strike that might end the cease-fire.

Some compensation might be offered Israel in the form of American military equipment to balance the tactical advantage Egypt may have gained through any clandestine missile movements.

President Nixon, for example, has given broad assurances to Israeli Premier Golda Meir that Israel will not suffer a military disadvantage for accepting the American peace initiative. Some American officials have called the Nixon pledge a "blank check" for new arms.